THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. India is one of the partner countries to the efforts of International Coffee Genome Network (ICGN). ICGN is a worldwide network of Scientists from research organizations, universities, industry within the coffee producing and consuming countries. The first founding meeting was held at Paris on 4th to 5th April, 2005 which was attended by 27 scientists from 12 countries and 3 other International research organizations including 2 scientists from Coffee Board and one from Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad. As on today there are 49 individual members and 5 Institutional members. The national funding for the Indian component is being provided by Department of Biotechnology to six institutes.

(c) The major efforts of the ICGN concentrate on use and conservation of coffee genetic resources through the application of genetic tools. A coffee genome database has been created by ICGN which is an open source database on coffee genomics and includes comprehensive information on the coffee specific microsatellites, ESTs, and other bioinformatic tools. The network would facilitate information and resource sharing within the scientific community and will help breeders by providing molecular tools and know-how for precision breeding. The major objectives of ICGN are development of trait specific molecular markers in coffee, formulation of a global and coordinated strategy for coffee genomics, enhancing the inter-institutional commitment to work jointly for value addition by avoiding repetition and to promote opportunities to fund common research.

Ratification of UN Convention Charter on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

2262. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD:
SHRI AJAY MAROO:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has signed the UN Convention Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March, 2007;

(b) whether India has been able to ratify the Convention; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI SUBBULAKSHMI JAGADEESAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The matter is under consideration.

Empowerment of dalits

2263. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the empowerment of dalits and other downtrodden sections lies with the land question in the country;